

Executive Summary

This visitor study report profiles a systematic random sample of Curecanti National Recreation Area (NRA) visitors during July 3 - 11, 2010. A total of 891 questionnaires was distributed to visitor groups. Of those, 491 questionnaires were returned resulting in a 55% response rate.

Group size and type	Thirty-eight percent of visitor groups were in groups of two and 29% were in groups of five or more. Sixty-three percent of visitor groups were in family groups.
State or country of residence	United States visitors comprised 99% of total visitation during the survey period, with 72% from Colorado and smaller proportions from 38 other states. Too few international visitors (N=15 individuals) responded to have reliable data.
Frequency of visits	Forty-four percent of visitors visit Curecanti NRA one to eleven times per year. Thirty-five percent of visitors were on their first visit to the park in their lifetime.
Age, ethnicity, race, and education level	Forty-four percent of visitors were ages 41-65 years, 16% were ages 15 years or younger, and 16% were ages 66 or older. Five percent were Hispanic or Latino, and 96% were White. Thirty percent of respondents had some college, while 27% had a bachelor's and 27% had a graduate degree.
Physical conditions	Ten percent of visitor groups had members with physical conditions that made it difficult to access or participate in activities or services. Hiking, using stairs, and walking were the services/activities most commonly listed as difficult to access or participate in.
Awareness of park management	Prior to their visit, 76% of visitor groups were aware that Curecanti NRA is a unit of the National Park System and 54% of visitor groups were aware of the difference between a National Park and a National Recreation Area.
Information sources	Most visitor groups (75%) obtained information about the park prior to their visit. Prior to this visit, visitor groups most often obtained information about the park through previous visits (51%), friends/relatives/word of mouth (40%), and the Curecanti National NRA website (31%); 94% received the information they needed. To obtain information for a future visit, 54% of visitor groups would use the park website.
Park as a destination	For 51% of visitor groups, Curecanti National NRA was one of several destinations. Thirty-two percent indicated that Curecanti NRA was not a planned destination.
Use of park campgrounds	Thirty percent of visitor groups camped in a Curecanti NRA campground. The most common reasons visitor groups did not camp inside the park were that the campgrounds lacked facilities (8%) and the location was not convenient (8%).
Length of stay	The average length of stay in the park was 53.3 hours, or 2.2 days. The average length of stay in the park area (with a 50-mile radius of Gunnison) was 114.8 hours, or 4.8 days.

Executive summary (continued)

Local and regional attractions	Sixty percent of visitor groups visited other local and regional attractions. Of those groups that visited other attractions, 66% visited Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and 31% visited Crested Butte.
Sites visited in the park	The most commonly visited sites in the park were Elk Creek (43%), Lake Fork (30%), and Cimarron (25%).
Activities	The most common activities on this visit were general sightseeing (47%) and fishing (46%). The most important activity was fishing (33%). On a future visit, visitor groups would prefer to participate in fishing (59%) and general sightseeing (46%).
Visitor centers	Forty-five percent of visitor groups visited a park visitor center. Of those groups, 68% visited Elk Creek Visitor Center and 31% visited Cimarron Visitor Center. They visited to obtain information (55%) and use the restrooms (53%). Of those visitor groups that did not visit either visitor center, 64% did not need visitor center services.
Visitor services and facilities	The visitor services and facilities most commonly used by visitor groups were the visitor center restrooms (47%), the boat docks (47%), and assistance from park staff (41%).
Protecting park attributes, resources, and experiences	The highest combined proportions of “extremely important” and “very important” ratings of protecting park attributes, resources, and experiences included clean water (97%), clean air (95%), and scenic views (89%).
Interpretive programs for a future visit	Seventy-three percent of visitor groups would be interested in interpretive programs on a future visit. The most common topics visitor groups were interested in learning about on a future visit were plants and animals (55%) and geology (55%); the most common type of interpretive program preferred by visitor groups was a self-guided tour booklet (55%).
Commercial services for a future visit	Sixty-three percent of visitor groups were interested in commercial services for a future visit. The most common commercial services that visitor groups would like to have available were restaurant/food service (56%) and grocery/camp store (52%).
Overall quality	Most visitor groups (85%) rated the overall quality of facilities, services, and recreational opportunities at Curecanti NRA as “very good” or “good.” Less than two percent of groups rated the overall quality as “very poor” or “poor.”

For more information about the Visitor Services Project, please contact the Park Studies Unit at the University of Idaho at (208) 885-7863 or the following website http://www.psu.uidaho.edu .
